

Answers To Frequently Asked Y2K Questions

What Is The Y2K Problem?

The Y2K “bug” is a potential problem for computer systems, which may not “recognize” the change from the 1900s to the year 2000. Many computer systems use a two-digit dating method that assumes that one and nine are the first two digits of the year. Without programming changes, systems will recognize 00 not as the year 2000, but as 1900. This could cause systems to either malfunction or shut down on Jan. 1, 2000.

Is The Government Doing Anything About It?

The federal government operates some of the world’s largest, most complex computer systems. Many of these systems play a key role in providing vital services to millions of people, such as veterans benefits, health care and small business loans, in addition to Social Security. President Clinton has made resolving Y2K systems issues a top priority.

All federal agencies are preparing for the century date change to make sure that their critical services continue without interruption.

What Is Social Security Doing About It?

Social Security was among the first federal agencies to recognize the problem, and we began preparing our systems years ago. We have been working to make sure the entire process for providing Social Security benefits—from calculating benefits to paying them—is ready for the next century.

All of our computer systems have been updated and certified by an independent contractor. In fact, we’ve been processing monthly benefit payments with year 2000-compatible computer systems since October 1998.

Will My Check Arrive On Time?

If you receive your Social Security benefit or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment by check, the United States Postal Service assures us the payment will arrive on time through the mail.

What About Direct Deposit?

If you receive your Social Security or SSI payment by direct deposit, you’ll be glad to know that the Federal Reserve Board and the Treasury Department have tested the direct deposit program successfully.

What’s more, the Federal Reserve included Social Security transactions in its testing with the banking industry.

What If Banks Aren’t Ready?

If some banks aren’t able to credit direct deposit payments, the Social Security Administration has worked with the Federal Reserve and Treasury to develop a contingency plan. The plan provides alternative ways of getting payments to Social Security beneficiaries, such as having local Social Security offices issue immediate checks when necessary.

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